SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

Saron's Mission: ***Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!!***

Joe Ulrey, Saron Congregational Council President
Cell: 313-718-2563
Email: josephulrey@yahoo.com

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
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bradley717@gmail.com

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist
Email: pianoladyijg@yahoo.com

Ken Boyd, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

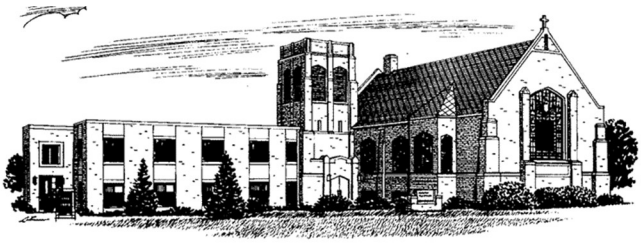
Typical Sunday at Saron:

Fall, Winter and Spring (**began Sept 8**):
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer (begins May 25, 2025):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia



We are excited to announce that on Sunday, February 9, Saron's congregation unanimously approved calling Pastor James Smith as our new pastor. Pastor James was thrilled to receive the news and the following Sunday afternoon, he attended a Meet & Greet at Saron with his wife, Pastor Nicole, and their 2 boys, Titus (nearly 5) and Timothy (3). Despite the snowy weather, a good number of you came by to welcome the Smith family and munch some cookies. Special thanks to Deb Standen for taking charge of that event.

Pastor James' first Sunday will be March 23. Here in the office, we are busy getting all the ducks in a row so there will be a smooth transition as we head into our busiest time of year – Holy Week and Easter!

We appreciate Bishop Satterlee and Pastor Chrisy for all the work they did in guiding us through the Call Process and to the right candidate. We also thank our Call Committee, especially chair Ted Dosch, for the thorough job of vetting and securing our new pastor. Thank you to Saron Church Council, especially president Joe Ulrey and worship liaison Erik Bergh, for stepping up in so many ways the last 8 months to make sure every need was met in the absence of a full-time pastor. Thank you to the staff for working independently to keep the bulletins printing, the music playing and the bills paid. And finally, thank YOU for making your faith and relationship with your Saron family the priority. You continued to attend worship, special events and meetings. You continued to give generously of your time, talents, and possessions. You made Saron a desirable option for a new pastor. It wasn't always easy but thanks to you, we are now at the finish line! Congratulations, Saron!!!

March 5
12:15pm
7pm

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 9am-1pm
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Ken Boyd (Bookkeeper):
Thursday Mornings and by Appointment

If you or your loved one is need of a visit or pastoral care, please contact Ed Staude. He will get you in touch with the correct person. Ed's contact info is 636/288-1016 or staude.edmund@gmail.com.

Other questions or concerns during the pastoral transition can be addressed to the appropriate council member or liaison:
President – Fran Bolson
Vice President – Erik Bergh
Secretary - Claudia Staude
Treasurer - Ed Brunner
Worship – Merilyn Frey
Learning - Fran Bolson or Scott Gaspari
Outreach - Jim Manore
Facilities - Steve Cook or Ed Brunner
Youth - Chuck Knebl
Support - Jim Manore or Ed Brunner
Hospitality - Merrily Smith or Claudia Staude

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

3/1 Michael Hoodlebrink
3/4 Krin Jurgensen
3/4 Caleb Pudell
3/7 Pastor James Smith
3/8 Austin Kamala
3/9 Colbe Pudell
3/10 Brad Frey
3/12 Susan Rood
3/14 Ruth Stelling
3/17 Mia Bradley
3/18 Peter Johnson
3/18 Constance Slater
3/19 Karleann Stankiewicz
3/21 Kaitlin Hooper
3/22 Janet Oleson
3/23 Molly Becker
3/25 James Nicholas
3/26 Sue Bailey
3/27 Eloise Moely
3/28 Matthew Gacek

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

3/2 Tom & Janet Taylor

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

CONDOLENCES

We offer our thoughts and prayers on behalf of the friends and family of the following members:

Laurel L. Gacek

Laurel passed away unexpectedly on January 29, 2025. A service was held at Saron on February 8, 2025.

John K. Olson

John passed away on February 4, 2025. A memorial service was held at Saron on February 17, 2025.

God is our refuge and strength.
- Psalm 46:1a

FORTIFY & fly

There were a lot of extra events at the church in February which slowed the progress of some of our painting in the Education Wing. However, phase 1 of the inspirational mural in the teen lounge is done! Thank you to Keith Stevens for designing and implementing that part of the project. Phase 2 will be collecting some uplifting phrases from the congregation that we will add with paint pens to fully achieve the graffiti vibe we are going for. You are always encouraged to head down and check out the progress!

The funds were approved in the 2025 budget so we are planning to move forward with the new signage to be installed on the outside of the building (alley side). Adding this lettering and a cross with the ELCA logo will bring attention to the doors that we now use as the front entrance, especially for those new to the area or for guests at weddings/funerals. We also intend to put smaller lettering on the glass on/near the doors with information such as the pastor's name and service times to make it look more professional and welcoming.

Worship

NEW: ASSISTED HEARING DEVICES

Our new sound system in the sanctuary came with headphones to assist those having difficulty hearing the worship service. If you are interested, ask Marcus if you can try one out.

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we have Sensory Bags available for use. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your prayer petitions (concerns or thanksgivings) via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made online via a link in our Thursday email. You may include as much, or little, detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are invited to be part of this Monday group at noon.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. You don't even have to pray aloud, if you would prefer to pray quietly. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. **Flowers are now $40 per vase.** Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then please **return the vase.**

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions with Marilyn Lucy (269/759-3464). We can also use more volunteers!

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

March 2: Transfiguration
Exodus 34:29-35
Psalm 99
2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2
Luke 9:28-36 [37-43a]

March 9: 1st Sunday in Lent
Deuteronomy 26:1-11
Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16
Romans 10:8b-13
Luke 4:1-13

March 16: 2nd Sunday in Lent
Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18
Psalm 27
Philippians 3:17-4:1
Luke 13:31-35

March 23: 3rd Sunday in Lent
Isaiah 55:1-9
Psalm 63:1-8
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Luke 13:1-9

March 30: 4th Sunday in Lent
Joshua 5:9-12
Psalm 32
2 Corinthians 5:16-21
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

YOUTH GROUP

We've decided to postpone our annual fiesta bar & pool party until Pastor James, Titus and Timothy can join us. Once we pick a date, it will take place after the 11am worship. This event is open to all our kids, Preschool - High School. Friends will be welcome too!

Youth Group (middle school & high school age) typically meets once per month after the late service for food, fun and fellowship.

Contact Scott at scottgaspari@outlook.com with any questions or to be added to the email list.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

We have many educational options to fit your needs and schedule. Always feel welcome to join us, at any time and for as many sessions as works for you.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We have opportunities for many ages and stages!

The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) offers the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The Thursday morning Bible study continues to work through *Joseph, the Journey to Forgiveness.* The class runs weekly from **9:30am-11am in the upstairs lounge**. Contact Colleen Lundgren at 269/921-4873 or colleenkl@icloud.com with any questions.

From the website: *This study explores what God has to say to us about grace and forgiveness through Joseph's story of trial and triumph found in Genesis 37-50. As we study his dreams, his betrayers, his dysfunctional family, his struggle to forgive, and his journey toward reconciliation, we'll find truths that echo into our own personal situations as well as practical help for answering common life questions.*

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

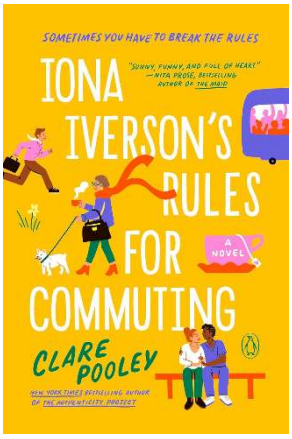
The group is taking a break for Lent starting Tuesday, March 4. We are evaluating several interesting books to serve as a resource when we resume studies on April 22. Look for the final book selection in the April Newsletter.

We meet Tuesday evenings at 6pm in the upstairs lounge for one hour, then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. All are welcome!

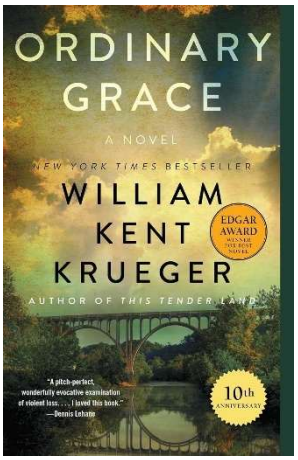
If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email
Don Hafer (269/985-3637, haferdon@gmail.com)
Ed Staude (636/288-1016, staude.edmund@gmail.com)
Eric Standen (269/759-3556, dande-standen@sbcglobal.net)

BOOK CLUB

On March 2 at 6:30pm in the upstairs lounge, *Iona Iverson's Rules for Commuting* by Clare Pooley is our book for discussion. Iona, a larger-than-life magazine advice columnist, travels the same 10 stops on the train each day with the same people. They never speak with each other. Iona's given them all nicknames. Then a single event starts a chain reaction and people with almost nothing in common find out that talking to strangers can teach you about the world and yourself. The book provides laughs and an uplifting tale to enjoy during this long, cold season of winter.


SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO BREAK THE RULES
"SUNNY, FUNNY, AND FULL OF HEART" —MITA PROSE, BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE MAID
IONA IVERSON'S RULES FOR COMMUTING
A NOVEL
CLARE POOLEY
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE UNFORTUNATE PROTEST

Then on April 6, *Ordinary Grace* by William Kent Krueger is our choice. All are welcome to join us at any session that sounds interesting. We can guarantee a good discussion and equally good fellowship. Questions or to be added to the email list for updates, please contact Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.


ORDINARY GRACE
A NOVEL
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
WILLIAM KENT KRUEGER
EDGAR AWARD
AUTHOR OF THIS TENDER LAND
"A pitch-perfect, wonderfully evocative examination of violent loss. . . . I loved this book." —Dennis Lehane
10th ANNIVERSARY

Keep reading. It's one of the most marvelous adventures that anyone can have.
- Lloyd Alexander

FORUM & fellowship

With the season of Lent upon us, Forum & Fellowship will be pausing until after Easter. At that point we will resume our look at *The Amen Effect; Ancient Wisdom to Mend Our Broken Hearts and World* as we finish up studying how we can be joyfully sharing God's love with all. Hope to see you at the Wednesday soup suppers and evening worships.

Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Due to a scheduled Lenten service, Deborah Circle will NOT meet in March. We will be participating in a service project which will be detailed in a future group email.

Contact Melanie at 269/449-8399 with any questions.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for at least 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

THE BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN™ HEART-TO-HEART™

For I was hungry and you gave me food.
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
-Matthew 25:35

On January 23, Saron members Mary Alice Brunner, Jim Manore, Cindy Brown, Mary Zylema & Ken Kohs gathered at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen to prepare and serve a meal. Guests were served a ham dinner which included potato salad, coleslaw, fruit, cookies & bread. The cookies were provided by Mary Alice Brunner.

If you are able to help with the prep and serving or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

NOISY OFFERING

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

We receive a noisy offering
(or those not-so-noisy bills)
on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to
ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

The first step in getting involved, is getting informed. Register to receive their communications at https://swmichinterfaith.org/contact1

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

Do you have old glasses sitting in a drawer? Lions Club has provided a collection box in the narthex. We have several members who are Lions that can deliver our glasses to the club where they will do more good. Thank you!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Lindsay Gaspari: 847/373-8826 or lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com

Support

The Support Committee typically meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with a brokerage firm to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Ed Brunner at ebrunner54@gmail.com to receive more information. Thanks!

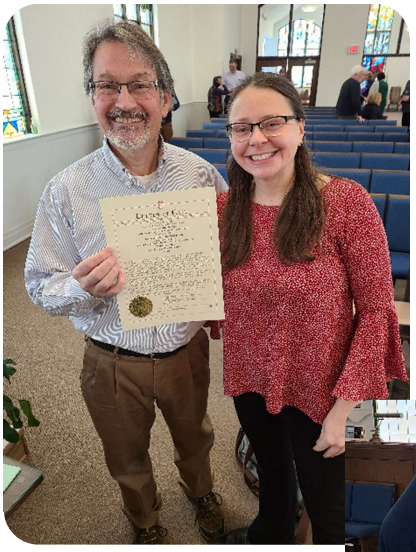
Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

Miscellaneous Bits of News

In case, like me, you didn't even know the piano needed to be watered. Thank you, Marcus!



Joe (Congregational President) and Amanda (Call Committee) posing with Official Letter of Call to Pastor James Smith.

Joe and Claudia (Congregational Secretary) signing Official Letter of Call.

Saron Lutheran Church

1875 | 150th Anniversary | 2025

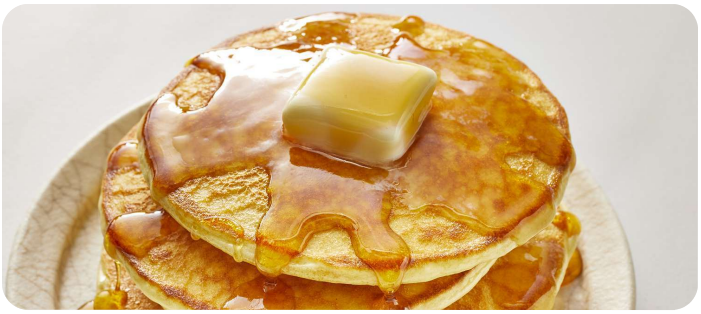
Generations of Serving & Sharing God's Love

Make new memories while we commemorate our past! Plan to attend as many events as possible and please let the lead of each subcommittee know if you'd like to help with the planning and implementation. We will update this list as it evolves.

March 30: Trivia Event

Lead: Scott Gaspari

See detailed article on the back of newsletter.



April 20: Easter Pancake Breakfast

Lead: Fran Bolson

May 10: Blossomtime Parade

Hot Dog Lunch Lead: Judi Huff

Blossomtime Parade Entry Lead: Marcus Roll

SOUTH BEND CUBS

June 20: South Bend Cubs Game

Lead: Kristen Harper

For $21, you get admission, a hot dog, chips, a drink and a baseball hat. Children 2 and under are free. Anyone is welcome to join, including extended family and friends. There will be fireworks! Let Amanda know ASAP if you did not reserve tickets but would still like to go. We *might* be able to get more.

July 13: Group Photo

Lead: Scott Gaspari

August 10: Anniversary Celebration

Worship Service Lead: Marcus Roll

Meal Deco & Program Lead: Kristen Harper

We will have a celebratory worship with Bishop Craig Satterlee at 10am, followed by a dinner at Union + Social, a beautiful venue in St. Joseph.

Commemorative Project

Lead: Marilyn Lucy

New Church Photo Directory

Lead: Kathie Bradley

We've all wanted one and with a new pastor, it will be more important than ever to have an updated photo directory. We have professional photographers coming **March 17 & 18 at 2pm - 8:30pm.** There is still time to use the link in the weekly email to book a slot. There will be a make-up day in May but we are trying to get as many done in March as possible.

Every family photographed will receive a free 8x10. There is NO obligation to buy anything. Directories will also be free once they are ready.

History Research, Documenting & Presenting

Lead: Kate Ulrey

Watch for emails asking for your stories! There will also be new posters with historical information appearing in the narthex throughout the year and trivia during announcements every other week. We will put as much of Saron's history as we can fit in the new directory.

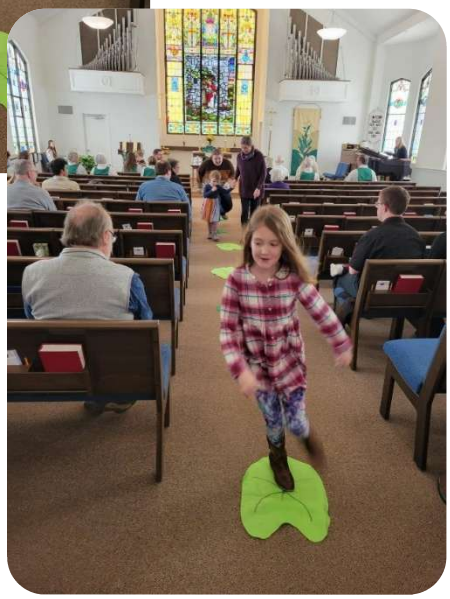
Looking Back at the February Event

We decided to turn our 2nd Annual Chili Bowl into a Chili Cookoff! We had 11 entries, a mix of reds and whites with 1 vegan option. The hungry crowd was able to "purchase" tokens, which were then used as votes by dropping them into baskets that matched the numbers on the crockpots. The baskets with the most tokens at the end of the meal were the winners. Chuck Knebl came in at #3 with his tasty red chili, Linda Pater was our runner up with a delicious white chili, and Dennis Lundgren was our 1st Super Chili Bowl Chili Cook Off Champion!

There was even a ring. He looks pretty happy with his glorious victory. We raised $375 towards our 150th Anniversary Fund and we had a really fun time together, leaving with big smiles and full bellies.

Kristen Harper made a bunch of these adorable gift mugs with a box of Saron mugs we found in storage. Through donations for them, we collected $230 towards our 150th Anniversary Fund! These 5 are still available. Ask Amanda if you'd like to get one for yourself or as a gift.

Leaping with JOY!



Prayer Labyrinth

Our beautifully embellished canvas prayer labyrinth will once again be available for walking during Lent, **beginning Ash Wednesday, March 5.** It will be set up in the upstairs lounge with various candles to help provide an atmosphere conducive to prayer and contemplation. You may visit before or after services on Wednesdays, Sundays, or any time the building is open for various activities or Bible studies. If you aren't sure when that is or would like to come at a specific time when the building is normally locked, contact **Kathy Bergh at 906/290-3346.**

Springtime Thoughts on Stewardship

STEWARDS IN ALL SEASONS

Spring is a natural time to reflect on stewardship. Witnessing the reawakening of the earth after winter encourages us to reflect on Christ's resurrection and what that means for us – and also to awaken us to new opportunities to be better stewards.

As often pointed out in these pages, Christian stewardship is much more than making a pledge for the church budget; it is a complete way of life – a life that tries to follow the ways of Jesus. Author and Lutheran minister W. H. Greever captured the essence when he wrote, "*Christian stewardship is the practice of the Christian religion . . . manifested in attitudes and actions.*"

Attitudes and actions! That's what it's all about. A simple action you can take this spring is to cultivate your potential as a steward. Just as seeds sprout and grow in spring, consider your own talents, actively work to develop them, and use them to benefit others. Also reflect on your connections to the community and find additional ways to contribute positively to the well-being of others.

But let's not stop with reflection. Hebrews 10:24 tells us, *"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds."* Not only are we to be good stewards, embracing all aspects of Christian life along the way, we must encourage others to do the same.

A perfect way to encourage others is to speak out against injustice wherever you see it. In a recent letter to the ELCA, Bishop Eaton said, "*As a church, we are called to speak up when the government distorts or denies the image of God by endangering access to protection, peace, and daily bread. Where harm or inequity occur, we are called by God to respond with love and advocacy.*" As members of the ELCA and particularly as members of a *Reconciling in Christ* congregation, we should be outraged at some recent government actions. Speak out! Provoke someone into doing something good.

"Your 'yes' to God requires your 'no' to all injustice, to all evil, to all lies, to all oppression and violation of the weak and poor . . ." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

* * * * * * *

The Stewardship Committee continues working on the stewardship focus for Fall 2025, *Generations of Generosity*, which will mesh with Saron's 150th celebration of "Sharing God's Love for All!!" If anyone has thoughts or suggestions, or especially if you have interest in joining our committee, we would love to hear from you (hafer.don@gmail.com). Don Hafer, for the Stewardship Committee

Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe.

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

MARCH 2025 NEWSLETTER

SUNDAY, MARCH 30 at NOON

The always entertaining Scott Gaspari has agreed to serve as Master of Ceremonies for a Trivia Event after church, around noon! We will have pizza, salad, fruit and desserts in the Fellowship Hall. There will be general trivia and Saron specific questions.

You can sign up as a team or add yourself to a team that has open spaces. Use the link in the weekly email or the clipboard in the narthex. Friends and family are welcome!

Not into the competition? Please still join us for food & fellowship! We can guarantee you'll have a good time. There will be a free-will collection basket towards our 150th Anniversary Fund.

MARCH 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**3** Noon Prayer Group	**4** 6pm Bible Study	**5** 9am Helping Hands **ASH WEDNESDAY** **12:15pm & 7pm**	**6** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**7**	**8**
9 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**10** Noon Prayer Group	**11** 8pm Support Meeting	**12** 9am Helping Hands 6:15pm Soup Supper 7pm Lent Worship	**13** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**14**	**15**
16 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**17** Noon Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting **PICTURE DAY** **2pm-8:30pm**	**18** **PICTURE DAY** **2pm-8:30pm**	**19** 9am Helping Hands 6:15pm Soup Supper 7pm Lent Worship	**20** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**21**	**22**
23 **Pastor James Start Day!** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**24** Noon Prayer Group	**25**	**26** 9am Helping Hands 6:15pm Soup Supper 7pm Lent Worship	**27** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **SOUP KITCHEN**	**28**	**29**
30 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option **Noon Trivia & Pizza Event**	**31** Noon Prayer Group					